



History of CNC



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JUN 12 2009

AAFC's insect collection originated in the 1880s with the gift of the personal collection of James Fletcher (Fig. 1), an accountant in the Library of Parliament. Fletcher was also a naturalist and because of his interest in insects he was named honorary entomologist to the Department in 1883. Following formation of the Experimental Farms System in 1886 he was appointed as the first Dominion Entomologist.



Fig. 1

In the beginning, AAFC's collection consisted mainly of insects affecting agriculture and forestry. The Biological Division of the Geological Survey was at the same time developing a parallel insect collection as they explored and mapped the country.

Burning of the Parliament buildings in 1916 resulted in members being moved to the Victoria museum, site of the Geological Survey collection. Because of ensuing congestion the collections were amalgamated in 1917 and the Canadian National Collection of Insects, Arachnids and Nematodes (CNC) was born in AAFC.



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

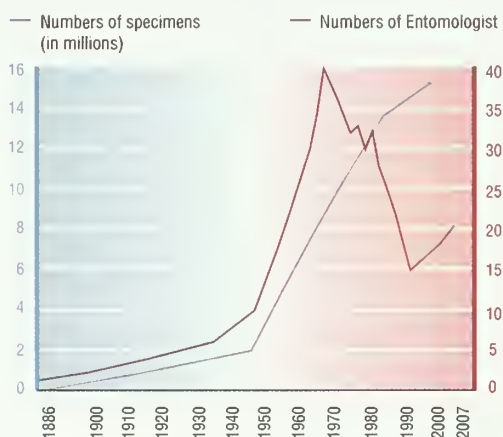
Initially housed in the Burks and Confederation buildings, in 1949 the CNC moved to the K.W. Neatby building (Fig. 2) on the Central Experimental Farm. The old part of Neatby was built by the Department of Defense in the 1920s to store the records of personnel who served overseas in World War I. The construction needed to sustain the massive weight of the records (Fig. 3) was ideal to hold the collection, which now consists

of about 16 million specimens organized in about 1400 insect cabinets (Fig. 4) plus 10s of thousands of microscope slide boxes and vial racks.



Fig. 4

Few entomologists were associated with the CNC during its first 50 years and there were less than 1 million specimens until about 1948. However, staff increased as part of the post World War II economic boom and the collection increased greatly (Fig. 5).



Since its beginning about 100 taxonomists have been associated with the CNC, reaching a peak of about 40 in the late 1960s and declining to about 15 in the 1990s (Fig. 5). Today, 1 Canadian Food Inspection Agency, 2 Canadian Forest Service and 17 AAFC scientists, as well as other biologists and technicians maintain and develop the CNC as an irreplaceable part of Canada's natural heritage.





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